

Introduction of an effective performance appraisal system

By Ester Monteiro

Introduction

Recent economic constraints on public sector have increased the level of demands for better quality of teaching and increasing expectations from teachers to deliver an instruction which responds to such quality however, this quest for a more effective teaching quality will end to nowhere if conditions conducive to the desired quality are not created. As a starting point, for instance, it is an imperative to acknowledge strategies which help develop potentials of the main players in the process (teachers) and optimise ways these can contribute to quality teaching. Performance appraisal or performance evaluation as it is also referred to in this article when handled effectively can be such a powerful resource and contribute to teacher development. Within this perspective, (Irvine, 2003) suggests that an emphasis needs to be on systems focusing on such purposes. Rather than focusing on a system which serves for accountability matters, schools need to adopt an appraisal model which acknowledges the development of teachers. Clearly understood, in searching to meet the conditions for

development of teaching practices the importance of an effective performance appraisal system cannot be underestimated.

However, in order to bring about quality teaching, the Cape Verdean government through the department of education has bolstered control over teachers' work and the managerial appraisal approach in place has gained more value since ever. It should be stated that the accelerated push for control can prove to be beneficial in certain instances (in Naidu, 2012). In our case, it has made teachers more accountable. To exemplify, these reinforced accountability practices have ended up challenging teachers to rethink aspects of teaching which were often neglected in some schools, as such, punctuality and attendance. Whether we cannot totally disregard an accountability appraisal model in our schools, overemphasising control over teachers does not necessary bring about the desired quality teaching (Naidu, 2007).

Performance management system within Cape Verdean secondary schools

Secondary government schools in Cape Verde run a traditional corporate style

performance evaluation model. This managerial approach for accountability purpose has recently gained more visibility as result of a heavier control over teachers' work. Thus, some teaching practices have now gained over attention at the expense of others equally important. Teachers often neglect aspects which are not evaluated or that an accountability appraisal does not contemplate. In addition, Irvine (2003) argues that an approach based on standards that externals have decided on may limit teacher's self - development and further concludes that a managerial approach to performance appraisal does not contribute to adding any value to the process of developing teachers.

There are further issues inherent in how appraisals are conducted in our schools. First, even though, teachers must be reviewed annually as part of the organisation policy. In our schools, it does not always happen. Sometimes when teachers are going for promotion which may happen every 3 years, (depending on several circumstances) they manifest their own interest in being appraised while other times not. The appraising does not happen in a consistent way.

Furthermore, it is conducted in a subjective manner causing more harm than good. Teachers often get too defensive every time an appraisal is reviewed due to lack of transparency, unfairness and with no evidence of data collected for evaluation (Robbins et al., 1986). To illustrate better, sometimes teachers are evaluated according to students' performance results. As a matter of fact, if the results are high it is understood as derived from teacher good performance contrarily, when they low achieve this is viewed as teachers having complete responsibility. But, 'assessing quality teaching based on student outcomes is problematic as there are other variables that influence student achievement as student motivation, social support and learning opportunities (in Gurr and Drysdale, 2012) Besides this, some studies have also shown that relying on impressions rather than facts can distort reality (in Maddux, 2000).

Implementing an appraisal model for development purpose

An innovative appraisal accounted for teacher development is to be considered whether we seek to improve the quality of teaching in our schools. Rather than a system which restricts teacher self-development, Irvine (2003)

advocates for a developmental approach to performance management thus, providing educators with opportunities to identify areas of improvement in teaching practice. To develop such approach, Jones (2014) states that schools are expected to have an agreed written performance management policy to ensure that all members understand what it is intended to be achieved, how it works within school and their responsibilities within the process.

Given this, the introduction of an innovative Performance appraisal (PA) for teacher development will be consider within the framework that is to help improve teaching practice so that teachers can provide quality teaching as they are expected to. There should be a goal oriented appraisal in which individual teachers through coaching tools are encouraged to discuss their development plan and set out goals in line with school development priorities and goals. Based on the principle of fairness, each individual teacher will be treated consistently in a sense that all teachers will be provided with opportunity to improve teaching practice according to their individual specific professional needs, not one model

serves all or following an approach based on certain standards.

In this essentially collegial approach teachers and coach are encouraged to share good practice through systematic and constructive feedback. In this process, peer assessment is sought for feedback on some teaching practice or research, not for evaluation purpose. To exemplify, teachers might want to find strategies to foster collaboration in class and then embark on an experience which help them in this regard. But the approach often encourages self-assessment and reflection as well. Additionally, in order to sustain teacher's continuous improvement schools need to assure that all necessary resources will be available to sustain the ongoing development approach. If the process is to be implemented, a significant amount of time has to be allocated for discussing, planning, feedback evaluation and accommodate other managerial procedures or teaching duties.

An approach which takes into account teachers' needs for development will certainly lead to a lift up in the quality of teaching. Therefore, according to Marshall (1997) it should be separated from processes of promotion and

remuneration. One should reinforce the importance to establish clear purpose and goals before the implementation of a new appraisal.

To introduce a new method appraising model may imply some challenges and a number of implications. In this regard, I will be looking at some of demands as teacher preparedness/openness to change their attitude and belief, school readiness and school leaders' support.

Challenges of adopting a new performance appraisal

A managerial appraisal approach for accountability purpose has been the only system for teaching professionals evaluation in place in the whole history of education in Cape Verde, considering another system leads us to raise the question: to what extent schools are prepared for an innovative approach?

One of the biggest challenges lies in the fact that the success of implementation of a new PA in public services requires some caution measurement of organisation readiness for change. With organisation readiness, it is meant the extent to which employees are committed to the change and whether organisations are able to effectively make the change happen. To put it

differently, Michael et al.2012) state that when implementing a new change in an organisation in particular of a performance management from which appraisals are part, pre-existing conditions and attitudes might have a huge effect. It is therefore important to ensure that organisations are ready for such a change and are able to drive the process effectively. Additionally, Robbins et al (1986) argue that employees may experience discomfort and even feel threatened in regard to their interest and job security if organisations to not follow certain preparation procedures prior to the implementation of any change.

Are our schools prepared for the schools implementation of a new performance appraisal?

One of the first procedures for the implementation of a new PA, as for teacher development for example, is to ensure teachers clearly understand why and how the whole process will be conducted. Some theorists argue that (In Robbins et al, 1986) the performance appraisal process and its outcome will affect an employee's motivation. It is further reinforced that employees' self-motivation is increased when there is a complementary

conjunction of the individual's needs and the organisation's goals (Harvard Business Review, 2005). This argument particularly makes sense if we consider the current appraisal model in place in educational organisations in Cape Verde. To illustrate better, the accountability model currently in use focuses on assessing how effective teachers are however, no evidence of teaching practice is collected until teachers are reviewed so, a subjective process in which teachers are sometimes judged unfairly will certainly have an impact on teachers' reaction to an innovative system. In an era of 'performativity' as termed by Naidoo (2012) and tough control over performance, it becomes even more necessary to clearly state the purpose of a new PA since teachers may fear being labelled as incompetent or put their job at risk in case they communicate their development needs.

Therefore, educational leaders have the responsibility to ensure teachers understand the alternative approach is for developmental practice as well as ensure about the level of commitment, as misunderstanding of the purpose may limit teachers' to this process commitment.

The level of commitment to the changing process may depend on whether employees believe organisations will be able to sustain and implement such change or not. Employees may be highly committed if organisations' readiness for change is also high. Contrarily, these are likely to be reluctant and thus put less effort in its implementation (In Michael et al., 2012). Employees need to know their time and effort are worthwhile. This challenge represents a huge implication for educational organisation in Cape Verde for two main reasons: the level of organisation readiness in terms of resources availability and the nature of the new approach itself.

Firstly, resources need to be provided to sustain the process in a systematic approach which requires training and some induction where appropriate. My school context is pretty challenging. With constant change of school managers, will prompt support (financial and others) necessary from administration still be ensured for the implementation?

Secondly, an appraisal for professional development is a collegial approach thus it is organised around systematic collaboration between all the parts

involved (teachers, peer-coaches), focusing on day-to day feedback in order to learn from each other and improve teaching practice. This challenge may imply a lot of work to be done before implementation of a new PA. In school where I work I had seen many teachers being resistant to classroom observation, preferring to work individually, teachers concern with the students they teach only so, learning understood as a private matter and class observation understood as a form of collecting evidence of what is not well, not for developmental purpose. For all these reasons, it is important to once again emphasise that the purpose of the new PA must be clearly defined before its communication to teachers. Egginton (2010) highlights that for changes to be implemented effectively and overcoming such resistance it takes time and effort and requires a two-way communication process. Teachers should understand they are accountable for each other learning and development and this requires a continually mutual prompted support and change in attitude.

Again the need to clearly state the purpose of the new appraisal model. Interested parties should establish common ground goals upon which

common work practice is to be developed (Egginton, 2010). Teachers may have different improvement needs, however, these must be in line with the organisation's goal. Above all, the ultimate goal is increase student learning outcomes. So, there should be a balance and most importantly there must be transparency in the process thus, a need for a well-structured, coherent and well informed approach.

Another concern, in our schools the process of appraising teachers does not happen in a consistent way and above all it is believed it does not add any value to teaching developmental practice thus, with the implementation of new system teachers might not show interest. They may be suspicious about the impact and benefits the alternative model will have on the teaching practice. Nevertheless, if we seek for quality of teaching an appraisal for teacher development can be a powerful tool. Important to note that each school should adopt a model which reflects teacher needs, school goals and priorities otherwise, it would be working according standards and an irrelevant system.

Conclusion

In Sum, we have seen that an appraisal for accountability purpose seems to be irrelevant system whether we seek for increasing quality teaching, since it takes no cognition of teacher's development needs. Rather, there should be a policy framework for implementing an appraisal for professional development which provides teachers with tools to identify teaching areas for potential development and this model should feature characteristic as such trust, collegiality, self-evaluation, ongoing support and peer feedback. However, to introduce a new method for improving teaching practice may imply some challenges and a number of implications. So, school leaders are called to the responsibility to find ways to effectively overcome such constraints.

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